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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for improving the development of students' reading skills. The targeted population consisted of students in kindergarten, first, and second grades. The classrooms were located in adjoining lower socioeconomic areas. The problem of poorly developed reading skills was documented through data collected by the teacher researchers through reading skills, checklists, and student assessments. An analysis of probable cause data revealed numerous reasons why low reading development might occur. Children may not have the exposure to life's experiences and the access to books necessary to experience success in reading due to low socioeconomic factors. Another factor, which plays a role in students' success in reading, is the lack of sufficient teacher preparation and a lack of knowledge in how to adapt teaching strategies to individual student's learning styles. A review of solution strategies combined with an analysis of the problem setting resulted in the selection of the following components: (1) the teacher increased phonemic awareness activities; (2) the teacher modeled strategies to improve fluency and comprehension; (3) the teacher implemented activities to improve writing skills; (4) the teacher exposed students to a wide variety of literature; and (5) the teacher provided an environment conducive to all learning styles. The data revealed that the students made a marked improvement in reading. On all measures used, student reading performance improved at each of the sites and in all classrooms studied. Appendixes contain a phonemic awareness recording sheet, reading fluency and comprehension selections for each grade level, word lists, checklists, and a parent survey form. (Contains 34 references, 8 figures, and 3 tables.) (Author/RS)

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IMPROVING THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' READING SKILLS

Angela Beneventi
Linda McEndollar
Deborah Smith

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

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Abstract

This report describes a program for improving the development of students reading skills. The targeted population consisted of students in kindergarten, first, and second grades. The kindergarten, first and second grade classrooms were located in adjoining lower socioeconomic areas. The problem of poorly developed reading skills was documented through data collected by the teacher researchers through reading skills, checklists, and student assessments.

An analysis of probable cause data revealed numerous reasons why low reading development might occur. Children may not have the exposure to life's experiences and the access to books necessary to experience success in reading due to low socioeconomic factors. Another factor, which plays a role in students' success in reading, is the lack of sufficient teacher preparation and a lack of knowledge in how to adapt teaching strategies to individual student's learning styles.

A review of solution strategies combined with an analysis of the problem setting resulted in the selection of the following components:

1. The teacher increased phonemic awareness activities.
2. The teacher modeled strategies to improve fluency and comprehension.
3. The teacher implemented activities to improve writing skills.
4. The teacher exposed students to a wide variety of literature.
5. The teacher provided an environment conductive to all learning styles.

The data revealed that the students made a marked improvement in reading. On all measures used, student reading performance improved at each of the sites and in all classrooms studied.

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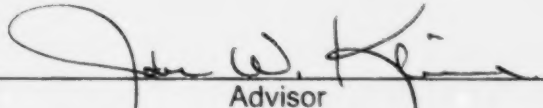

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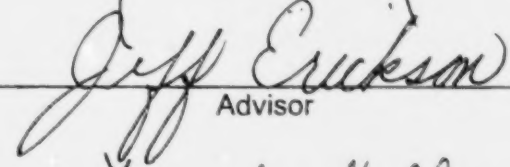

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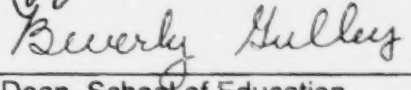

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students in the targeted primary classes have poorly developed reading skills that interfered with academic growth. This inadequacy has been made evident through teacher observations and low scores on achievement tests.

Immediate Problem Context

Site A

Site A consisted of 278 students in grades pre-kindergarten through second. The students' racial breakdown at this school was 1.4% Black, 97.5% White, 0.7% Hispanic, and 0.4% Asian. The percentage of low-income students was 41.4%. The school had an attendance rate of 95.1% with a mobility rate of 23.5%. Truancy was 2.5% at this time. One hundred percent of the parents at this school made at least one contact with the students' teachers during the preceding school year (School Report Card, 2000). Site A had 12 regular division classroom teachers, 2 special education teachers, a speech pathologist, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, and a technology director. The average teaching experience was 12.2 years, and 1% had a master's degree (B. Miller, Personal Communications, May, 2001).

The students received instruction in reading, language arts, math, science, healthful living, fine arts, and social studies. Classes in music, physical education, and library were also available. Specialized programs included a half day pre-kindergarten, a Title 1 self-contained 1st grade class and an inclusive 2nd grade Title 1 program. There was an average of 19.3 students per class in this school. Site A had a before and after school latchkey program and participated in the Pizza Hut Book-It program. The parents' club played an important role in the school as they raised monies through fund-raisers and provided assistance within the building.

The facility for Site A was a one level brick building that had one corridor from front to back. The building contained eleven regular division classrooms, one pre-kindergarten, two special education classes, a title 1 reading room, a music room, a teacher's lounge, a principal's office, and a gymnasium that also functioned as a cafeteria. This school did not have a library, so students were taken to the public library across the street once a week to obtain books. Site A was undergoing construction; eight classrooms and a second gymnasium were added to the facility. When construction was completed, the district's third and fourth grade students were incorporated into the pre-K - 2 building.

Two classrooms from Site A were utilized for the purpose of this research. Each of these classes contained approximately 20 kindergarten or second grade students. Both classes possessed a television monitor, five computers with Internet access, a printer, a scanner, and a carpeted area for instruction.

The far wall in Class A was made up of windows and a door that lead to the playground. There was a small restroom located in the back of the room near the door. The windows allowed the hot afternoon sun to warm the classroom. This room bordered the playground and received distracting recess noise. The room was brightly lit and full of colorful decorations, including a varied display of student's art. The classroom contained centers for art, reading, listening activities, and free play. The carpeted area was used for class meetings and story time, as well as for instruction. A group of four tables was set up in the middle of this class for students to explore and discover new concepts.

In Class B the far wall was made up of windows that faced the playground with shelving units located below them. The noise from the playground was a distraction when other classes were out for recess. There was a new magnetic white board on the wall next to the teacher's desk. The student's desks were arranged in groups of five and were centrally located in the room. The room was brightly lit and full of colorful decorations. The classroom contained centers for computers, reading, listening activities, and games.

Site B

Site B consisted of 526 students in grades kindergarten through fourth. The students' racial breakdown of this school was 78.1% Black, 19.6% White, 1.3% Hispanic, 0.8% Asian, and 0.2% Native American. The percentage of low-income students was 92%. The school had an attendance rate of 93.9% with a mobility rate of 52%. Truancy was 3.3% at that time.

During the preceding school year, 85.8% of the parents at this site made at least one contact with the students' teachers (School Report Card, 2000). Site B had 23 regular division classroom teachers, 5 special education teachers, a lead teacher, a behavior specialist, and 2 speech pathologists. The average teaching experience was 13.2 years, and 43% had a master's degree or above. There was an average of 21 students per class in this school. Many of the students came from families or foster homes that received public aid and free or reduced lunch. The students received instruction in spelling, reading, language arts, math, science, health and social studies. In addition to those topics, the students at this school received daily lessons on social development. Specialized classes for orchestra, music, library, physical education, and computers were also available. There were after school programs in reading, science, art, and basketball. Site B had a before and after school latchkey program, and there were homework clubs for grades 1 through 4 (H. Sanders, Personal Communications, May, 2001).

The facility for this site is approximately 100 years old. It has three main floors and a basement that contains five classrooms, the cafeteria, and four restrooms. All of the main level floors have huge foyers and at least one flight of stairs at each end of the building. The first floor houses seven classrooms, the office, a gymnasium, the teachers' lounge and two faculty restrooms. The second floor has eight classrooms, a special education resource room, two speech rooms, the crisis intervention respite room, and the music class.

The third floor contained seven classrooms, the computer lab, a teachers' resource room, and the library, which was housed in the foyer. The crisis intervention respite room, the music class, and the library could all be distracting at times for the classes that are located near them.

A first grade class located on the second floor of this building was utilized for the purpose of this research. This classroom had two windows that overlooked a playground of asphalt. A behavior chart was located on the wall at the entrance of the class. A multicolored rug was located directly across from the door, and a long bookcase was used to separate it from the rest of the room. A computer station was located at the rug to allow for whole-class activities. The room's only chalkboard was located on the front wall above the carpeted area. The back wall was a word wall and was covered with print. Students' work was showcased on one of the bulletin boards, and the other was used for seasonal decorations. The letters of the alphabet were located above the bulletin boards, and other educational materials were displayed throughout the room. Five tables were organized in a very structured setting with individual desks available for students who needed to work independently. Shelves beneath the windows provided a variety of learning activities for the students to utilize.

The Surrounding Community

Site A

District A had an enrollment of 768 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. This district's students' racial breakdown was comprised of 1.3% Black,

96.7% White, 1.6% Hispanic, 3.3% Asian, and 0.2% Native American. In this district 38.5% of the students were from low-income families. This school system had an attendance rate of 94.4% and a mobility rate of 26.1%. Chronic truancy was 1.5%. District A had 50 full-time classroom teachers. The average years of teaching was 10.5 years, and 12% of these teachers had a master's degree or above. One hundred percent of the teachers in this district were White. District A employees were 8% male and 92% female. The parents of 100% of students in this district made contact with their child's teacher at least once during the preceding school year. The average administrator's salary was $58,357 with a pupil -administrator ratio of 153.6:1. The average teacher's salary was $30,624 with a teacher-pupil ratio of 19.2:1. The operating expenditure per child was $5,172 (School Report Card, 2000).

The population of the community surrounding Site A was 5,938; of those 2,909 were male, and 3,029 were female. Approximately 35% of the children among this population did not live in a traditional family setting, and grandparents were rearing another 10%. This community's racial breakdown was comprised of 88.7% White, 0% Black, 0.6% Native American, 0.3% Asian, and 0.4% other race. The median household income of this community was $25,058. More than 10% of the population did not have a ninth grade education, and 28% did not have a high school diploma or its equivalent (Census Data, 1990). Approximately 50% of the community qualified as low income, and 31% of all households were comprised of renters (Claritas Reside Data, 1996).

There were no manufacturing jobs or large companies located in the village where Site A is located; therefore, retail jobs were most common. The village contained four gas stations, a Family Dollar, five fast food businesses, several small shops including a tattoo parlor, three taverns, a small community library, a strip club, and six churches of various denominations. Approximately 90% of all employed community members commuted more than five minutes to work.

The community surrounding Site A offered limited recreational activities. The village has a historical fort that sits on the bluff above the river. There is a campground located on the property near this historical fort that offers a large open area for outdoor activities. The community center located in this village provides select family-oriented activities, such as youth basketball, and houses a summer day camp. The police station in Site A employs at least two officers per shift, one being dedicated to the Drug Awareness Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program that served the school district. The closest hospital to Site A was 15 minutes away, as is a neighboring town's junior college.

Site B

District B is located in a medium to large Midwestern city. It had an enrollment of 15,134 students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. This district's students' racial breakdown was 55.2% Black, 40.6% White, 2.2% Hispanic, 1.8% Asian, and 0.1% Native American students. In this district 60.3% of the students were from low-income families. This district had an attendance rate of 92.9% and a mobility rate of 36%. Chronic truancy was 7.3%.

District B had 1,115 full-time classroom teachers. The average experience of teaching was 15 years, and 47% of those teachers had a master's degree or above. The teachers' racial breakdown was 91.8% White, 7.1% Black, 0.6% Hispanic, and 0.4% Asian. District B employees were 21.8% male, and the other 78.2% were female. The parents of 96.5% of students in this district made contact with their child's teacher at least once during the preceding school year. The average administrator's salary was $70,234 with a pupil-administrator ratio of 202.9:1. The average teacher's salary was $40,881 with a teacher-pupil ratio of 19.0:1. The operating expenditure per child was $7,490 (School Report Card, 2000).

The community for Site B is located on the east bluff of a medium to large Midwestern city. The population of the community surrounding Site B was 20,163. The median age of this population was 32 years. Married-couple households made up 40% of this community. The households headed by females with no husband present was 18.6%, and 37.8% were single person households. This community's racial breakdown was as follows: 74% White, 23.4% Black, 0.3% Native American, 0.4% Asian, and 1.9% other races. In this Midwestern community, 14,748 persons were 16 years of age and over. The labor force was made-up of 58.5% of those people, and 5.9% of the civilian labor force was unemployed. The occupations of employed persons 16 years of age and over were 20.2% managerial and professional specialty occupations; 32.3% technical, sales, and administrative support occupations; 19.5% service occupations; 0.9% farming, forestry, and fishing occupations; 10.6% precision

production, craft, and repair occupations; and 16.3% operators, fabricators, and laborers. The median household income of this community was $19,390, and the median family income was $24,213. The poverty level of this midwestern community was 26.7%. In this area 29.7% of the population 25 years or older did not have a high school diploma or its equivalent (U.S. Census, 1990).

National Context of the Problem

Poorly developed reading skills have become a national problem. One out of five adults in America cannot read. This number adds up to nearly 40 million people who cannot read a want ad, follow the directions on a bottle of medication or fill out a job application (Wade, 1998). Illiteracy is often a factor in poverty. Earnings of people with little or no reading skills are two thirds less than those who can read (Mithers, 01). The Department of Labor estimated that illiteracy has cost the United States businesses around $225 billion a year. These costs are due to absenteeism, employee mistakes, injuries and other problems that are directly related to illiteracy (American Demographics, 1996). "Poor academic achievement is a major factor in crime and delinquency" (Winters, 1997, p 1). Twenty-five percent of the prisoners in Unites States prisons are illiterate. It costs the state and federal governments millions of dollars a year to house, clothe, and feed the inmates in our country's prisons (Winters, 1997).

In a recent report, it was found that 92% of American students had the ability to read and comprehend at a basic level by age nine. However, many could not analyze and interpret at a successful level even by the age of seventeen (Routman, 1997). The 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress

showed that 40% of fourth graders did not attain the basic level of reading, and that 70% failed to attain the proficient level. Students with reading difficulties represent a cross-section of American children. It is not a discriminating problem. It affects the affluent as well as the poor (U.S. Department of Education Strategic Plan, 1997).

Students who come to school lacking in the areas of prior knowledge, with little exposure to the written word, can be limited in what they are able to accomplish in their early educational experiences (Richardson, 1998). The reading battle is most often in kindergarten and first grade. Areas in reading that are lacking consist of poor decoding skills, weak vocabulary, poor spelling, the inability to read strategically, poor motivation, too few reading opportunities outside of school, and a lack of confidence on the students' part (Honig, 1997).

Reading does not come naturally to most children. Effective teaching is the key (Honig, 1997). Teachers must use numerous strategies to affect the different learning modalities. Using multiple approaches and employing various techniques and strategies, the teacher can make learning visible and provide many ways to demonstrate learning (Brownell & Walther-Thomas, 1999).

While some children have many strengths and can learn with nearly any reading approach, others are not so blessed. In 1997 Maria Carbo stated, "No one reading method or set of reading materials is ideal for all students" (p 41). Many students that have weaknesses need instruction that focuses on the strengths that they possess (Carbo, 1997). The key to educational success is teaching children to read. Reading is the foundation for all aspects of

educational achievement. Without the skill of reading being fully developed students cannot experience success in school. This should be the highest priority in elementary schools (Honig, 1997).

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

Students with poor reading skills find it very difficult to be successful in school. Reading is not only necessary in school, but in nearly all other aspects of life. In order to document the evidence of poor reading skills, the researchers chose to keep phonemic awareness records, implement book knowledge checklists, writing checklist, and parent surveys. In addition, Classroom A has implemented sight word and comprehension checklists. Classrooms B and C were administered fluency selections, comprehension selections, and sight word mastery tests. The classrooms were treated differently due to the ages and grade levels of the students participating. Classroom A was a kindergarten class, Classroom B was a second grade class, and Classroom C was a first grade class.

Of the 35 students in Classrooms A and B, 31 were involved in the process over the 18 week time period. Of the 19 children in Classroom C, 6 were involved. The number of students' participation in Classroom C was low due to poor parental involvement and a high mobility rate at this school. Children not involved were those who did not return permission slips or moved in at a later date.

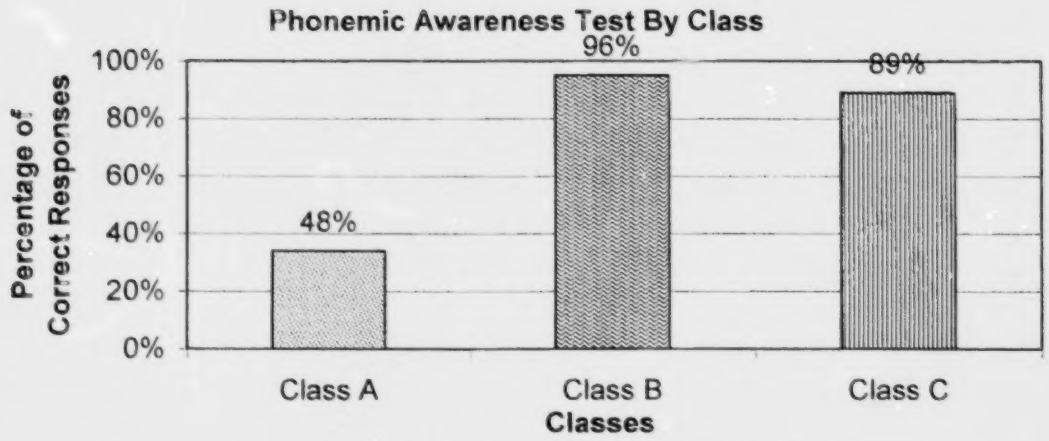

Figure 1. Phonemic Awareness Testing for Class A (Kindergarten), Class B (Second Grade), and Class C (First Grade)

Students were tested at the beginning of the year on phonemic awareness (Appendix A). This testing consisted of four parts. The first aspect of the testing was to have the students sequence the alphabet by having them recite the alphabet individually to the researcher. The second area of phonemic awareness tested was letter-sound correlations. In this aspect of the test, the students were again asked to individually name and tell the sound of the upper and lower case letters of the alphabet to the researcher. The third step of evaluating phonemic awareness was to have the students participate in letter dictation. The researcher said the name of the letter, while the students wrote the uppercase and lowercase letter for each one on their individual papers. Finally, the students were asked to make letter sound identification by writing the letter of the sound that the researcher said. Figure 1 shows the average of correct responses for all three classrooms. The average of correct responses for Classroom A was 34%. The average of correct responses for Classroom B was 95%. Classroom C had an average of 89%.

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Table 1

Book Knowledge Checklist

Statement	Class	Always	Sometimes	Never
I understand that a book is for reading	A	100%	0%	0%
	B	100%	0%	0%
	C	100%	0%	0%
I know where to begin reading on a page	A	50%	25%	25%
	B	100%	0%	0%
	C	33%	67%	0%
I am able to turn the pages of a book properly	A	100%	0%	0%
	B	100%	0%	0%
	C	50%	50%	0%
I know what the title of a book is	A	0%	0%	69%
	B	100%	0%	0%
	C	33%	67%	0%
I know what the author of a book is	A	0%	0%	100%
	B	100%	0%	0%
	C	0	67%	33%
I know what the illustrator of a book is	A	0%	0%	100%
	B	100%	0%	0%
	C	0%	50%	50%

The students' ability to demonstrate and identify certain aspects of books was monitored by the researchers (Appendix I). The researcher for Classroom A checked this knowledge by individually working with the students. Classrooms B

and C reported their findings through classroom work and observations. Table 1 shows that Classrooms A, B, and C all demonstrated great knowledge of book parts. Some difficulties were apparent in the following areas: where to begin reading on a page, identifying the author of the book, recognizing the title of the book, and identifying the illustrator of the book.

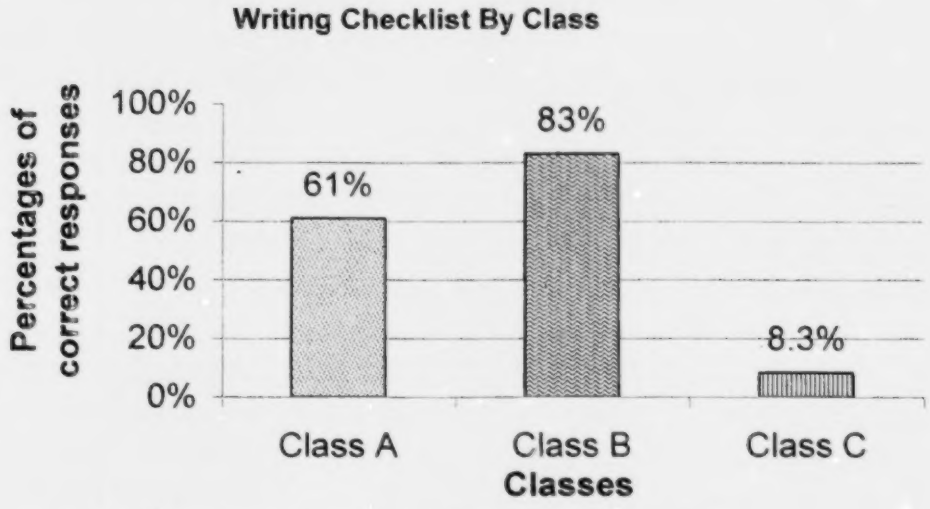

Figure 2. Average Percentage Score On Writing Checklist By Class

Figure 2 shows the percentage of writing skills mastered. The researchers checked for a demonstration of knowledge through observations, class participation, and a writing checklist (Appendices L and M). Classroom A demonstrated an average of 61%, Classroom B had an average of 83%, and C demonstrated average of 8.3% correct. Items that were not mastered for Classroom A were primarily in the areas of pre-writing strokes and sentence structure. Items of non-mastery for Classroom B were in the area of early fluency. Classroom C demonstrated non-mastery in the emergent level as well as in the early fluency level.

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Table 2

Parental Involvement Survey

Statement	Class	Always	Most Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
I read for enjoyment	A	5	2	6	0	0
	B	6	5	4	0	0
	C	3	0	2	0	0
I read to my child daily	A	4	5	3	1	0
	B	2	3	9	1	0
	C	1	1	4	0	0
My child looks at and reads books by self	A	7	4	2	0	0
	B	8	5	2	0	0
	C	1	1	3	1	0
My child understands what is read or heard from books	A	6	6	1	0	0
	B	6	6	2	1	0
	C	0	3	3	0	0
My child likes to draw or write	A	9	2	1	1	0
	B	12	2	1	0	0
	C	2	1	3	0	0
My child can write simple words and sentences	A	4	3	3	1	2
	B	13	1	1	0	0
	C	1	1	2	1	0

Table 2 shows how the parents responded to a survey (Appendix N) regarding their personal view of reading and related activities. The majority of parents who filled out the survey at least sometimes read for their own enjoyment, and many read to their children on a daily basis. The children in all researched classrooms researched enjoyed books for the most part, and would

look at and read books by themselves. The children seemed to understand what was read and heard from stories. In Classroom A children showed low numbers in being able to read and write sentences; although they did show ability to write simple words.

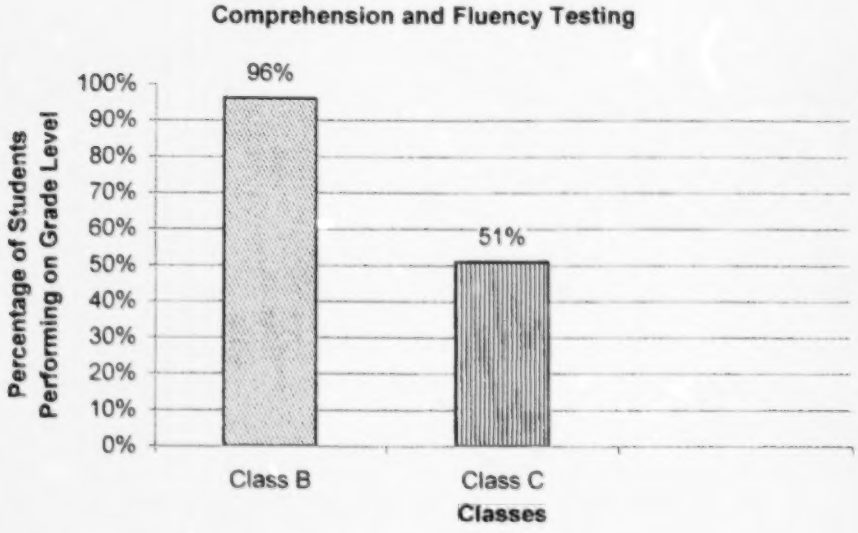

Figure 3. Comprehension and Fluency of Classroom B (Second Grade), and Classroom C (First Grade)

Figure 3 shows the number of students that are performing on grade level in comprehension and fluency in first and second grade. The researchers in Classrooms B and C presented individual reading inventories (Appendices B, C, D, E, and F). Each student had to read a selection and answer questions. This process was performed on an individual basis. Ninety-six percent of students in Classroom B were performing on grade level. In Classroom C, 51% of the students were performing on grade level.

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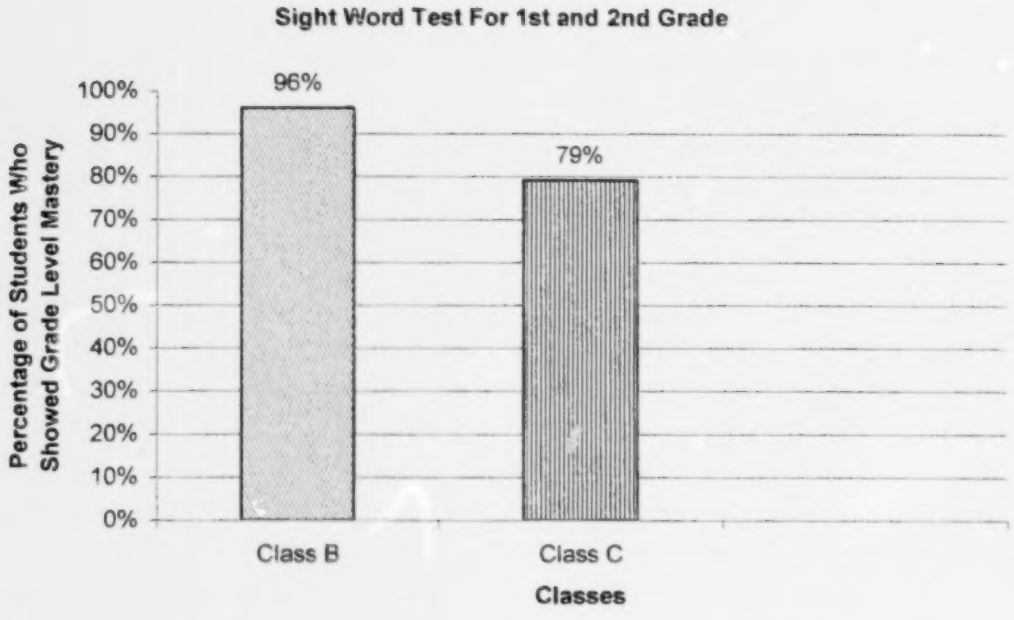

Figure 4. Sight Word List Results From Classroom B (Second Grade), and Classroom C (First Grade)

Figure 4 shows percentage of students who showed mastery of sight words on grade level in Classroom B and Classroom C. These tests (Appendices F, G, and H) were used to identify the learners' level of learning on sight words. These tests were multiple-choice selections in which the students identified words orally given by the teachers. The average of sight word mastery for Classroom B was 96%. The average score for Classroom C was 79%.

Probable Cause

The professional literature suggested that there are many reasons why children have difficulties in reading. It suggested that a lack of preparation of our nation's teachers, children coming from poverty, and limitations in fluency as key problems.

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We, as a nation, ask our teachers to come in to a classroom as experts in teaching reading without providing them with the necessary background and skills to do so. There is more to teaching reading than handing a teacher a good beginning reading series. "Very few teachers come to classroom instruction with an understanding of the sound system, the print system, the nature of word learning, or the nature of sentence and text structure (Moats, 2001, p. 9).

"Many a low-income child entering kindergarten has heard only half the words and can understand only half the meanings and language conventions of a high-income child" (Hirsch, 2001, p. 6). This statement was supported by Lyon (1998) who stated that children entering kindergarten and elementary grades without early experiences are more at risk for reading failure than those that come from a wealth of experiences. He further stated that many poor readers have not had the opportunity to consistently engage in the language play that will allow for the development of sound structure and language patterns. These same children have limited exposure of being read to on a daily basis. Children that are at increased risk of reading failure include those living in poverty, having poor expressive language, having low-functioning parents, and those having handicaps such as speech, language, and hearing (Lyon, 1998). Children who come from poverty stricken homes do not have many of the advantages of their counterparts. The parents of low income children either do not know how to provide their children with the vocabulary necessary to succeed, or they cannot afford to provide the experiences needed to do so (Richardson, 1998).

Many poor readers are not phonemically aware, have problems with the alphabetic principles and cannot apply these skills in a fluent manner;

furthermore, they lack strong vocabularies and syntactical and grammatical skills. In addition to these obstacles, they may have trouble relating reading to their own life experiences. All of these difficulties could hinder a child's reading development (Lyon 1998). Honig (1997) agreed and stated that students need a phonemic awareness program, which includes letter sound correspondences, and decoding skills. If a child does not receive proper instruction in phonemic awareness and alphabetic skills, and if he or she does not learn how to apply that knowledge to decoding words, they are unlikely to succeed at reading. Once a child falls behind, they rarely catch up (Moats, 2001).

Summary

In summation, poor teacher training, poverty, and little to no prior experiences are profound factors in a child's chances of academic success. Without these key components, it is probable that students will become frustrated and even give up. It is believed that poverty and little to no prior experiences played a major roll in students' low abilities in Classroom C. The students in Classrooms A and B come from a higher socio-economic area than Classroom C; therefore, their scores are slightly more elevated. Classroom A is a kindergarten class, therefore, the students are at the beginning of their educational experiences.

Chapter 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

There is not one correct way to teach reading. There are multiple reasons why children cannot read. While many of these factors are out of the teachers control, there is still much that can be done. If educators will keep an open mind to new methods and apply new ideas, students can meet with success. Teachers face this dilemma daily in classrooms all across the nation. Research showed that the responsibility for meeting student's needs lies heavily on the teacher. The teacher must be capable of adapting various activities to individual situations. An excellent teacher knows that good teaching requires the ability to know what and when to do what needs to be done (Duffy & Hoffman, 1999). Lyon (1998) stated that reading is not a natural process and must be taught.

Research showed that children learn in a variety of ways. Marie Carbo (1997) stated that there is no single best way to teach children to read. She also stressed the importance of teaching to children's strengths and accommodating their interests. This can be accomplished by providing a relaxing, literature rich reading environment that includes inviting reading centers and giving students a wide range of reading choices.

Fluency is a key component of effective reading. The first step in determining a student's fluency is through assessment. The teacher then helps the student set

an achievable fluency goal. The next step in this process would be for the student to read self-selected passages for self-monitoring. After these procedures, he or she would reread the same passage three or four times. The student would read independently, in a soft voice, using a timer when trying to attain the goal. Finally, the student will have the teacher check his or her fluency rate (Hasbrouk, Ihnot, & Rogers, 1999). Mastropieri, Leinart and Scruggs (1999) found this strategy to be beneficial and also recommend having the students look over the material before reading it with a partner. They further stated that comprehension goes hand in hand with the rate and ease that readers process their reading material. If a student labors over the material being read, then understanding of the material is hindered.

"Although spoken language is seamless, the beginning reader must detect the seams in speech, unglue the sounds from one another, and learn which sounds go with which letter" (Lyon, 1998, p. 17). This means that the teacher must first be sure that students can hear and speak the combined sounds we use to create words. Louisa C. Moats (2001) supported this assumption and stated that reading and writing are unnatural forms of language that depend heavily on oral language. Children must know that words are made up of individual sounds and that written words represent spoken sounds. Recognizing individual words contributes to 80% of meaning in first grade. In later years, it is more important to focus on other factors such as strategic reading or the ability to verbalize what has been read. Recognizing individual words is still extremely necessary for reading success. For reading comprehension to take place, 18 or 19 out of 20

words should be recognized automatically by the student. The major goal for kindergarten and early first grade reading instruction should be the decoding of simple words. Around 95% of children in kindergarten are mature enough to learn basic phonemic awareness and letter recognition. This fact is also true for first grade with phonics and decoding. Students must be taught these skills early or recovery is nearly impossible (Lyon, 1998). "Only one in eight children reading below grade level by the end of first grade will ever read grade-appropriate materials..." (Honig, 1997, p. 3). Honig went on to say that rhyming and sound word games help most children to gain basic phonemic awareness. Teachers in the primary grades understand that rhymes help their students to understand that letter clusters or families can represent the same sounds in different words. For example in the nursery rhyme "Jack and Jill," the teacher can point out that Jill and hill rhyme and that other words can be made using the –ill ending (Johns & Lenski, 1997).

There are numerous methods that can be used in teaching reading to children. A teacher who implements a variety of materials, programs, and methods targets the individual child's needs thus allowing reading instruction to be most beneficial (Duffy & Hoffman, 1999). No one method is a guarantee to reading success. Therefore, implementation of various methods will enable a teacher to reach the majority of the students in a classroom. Several that have met with success are the four block method, modeling, peer and adult tutoring, twin texts, and poetry and music.

Using the four block method developed by Cunningham and Allington (1999), literacy instruction takes place in the context of "four blocks" of time. These blocks of time consist of a guided reading block, a self-selected reading block, a writing block, and a working-with-words block. The guided reading block consists of the teacher choosing one or two reading selections per week from either basal readers or trade books. One of these selections is written below grade level, and the other is on grade level. The students read the selection several times either individually, with a partner, or in small groups. Students are then involved in whole group comprehension instruction, discussions or response activities before, during, and after reading.

Self-selected reading involves the teacher reading a book aloud to the class. The students then choose texts on differing difficulty levels and read these to themselves. The teacher listens to and confers with several children during this time and takes anecdotal notes. At the end of this session, several students will share what they are reading with other class members.

In the writing block, the teacher models with mini-lessons that focus on different aspects of writing. Students then write independently using the writing process while the teacher conferences with individual students. At the end of the writing block, students will share their writing with other students.

During the working-with-words block, students learn how to read and spell high frequency words. In addition they learn to decode and spell other words. By displaying five new high frequency words a day on the word wall, the teacher accomplishes these goals. All words, both old and new, are reviewed in many

ways. The word wall is to be utilized all year with these words being used in other blocks.

Richards (2000) recognized that modeling is an important aspect of successful reading. Students listening to effective fluent oral reading will benefit greatly as they strive to achieve their own fluency. The idea of modeling is supported by Wollman-Bonilla and Werchadlo (1999). These researchers demonstrated success in this area by using the teacher as a model when teaching children how to use writing response journals.

Another solution to help with the success of reading involves peer or adult tutoring. Slower readers can benefit in areas of vocabulary and summarization of reading by having another person prompt thinking, give insight to language, and define vocabulary. A tutor can also give the reader a mental image to enhance what is being read by describing an image that occurs in his or her own mind when certain selections are read (Smith & Sensenbaugh, 2000). Richards (2000) supported this method when she described paired oral reading. Students who pair up with partners can give immediate feedback to one another.

Camp suggested that because most information children must learn comes from textbooks, they must become accustomed to the style of writing used in textbooks. It is enjoyable and beneficial to the reader to have the opportunity to experience fact and fiction in literature. This is accomplished by teaching with twin texts as advocated by Deanne Camp (2000). Twin texts are two books that are on the same or related topic. One of the books is fiction, and the other is nonfiction. However, it is easier for some children to comprehend information

related to a topic as found in a fiction selection. An example would be Stellaluna written by Janell Cannon and Bats by Gail Gibbons. Both selections expose children to factual information about bats.

When literature and music are combined, the artistic side of a child can develop both cognitively and emotionally. Students can become engaged with the texts through these experiences. Wigfield found (as cited by Towell, 2000, p. 2) that "Engagement is a key factor for motivating children to read and one that leads to lifelong reading." Children obtain more success in reading if the words are familiar and there is a rhythm or pattern to the reading. There are a number of ways to build reading skills by combining music with literature. Some examples are reading picture books made up about songs, reading picture books written by musicians, combining poetry with music, and by using music to set the mood for particular stories (Towell, 1999).

Research has shown that the success for reading begins in the home when children are very young. Patents who take time to read to their children are preparing them for future formal instruction. "This rich background in language provides a foundation of interest and experience on which teachers can build. When it's missing, it's harder, but still possible for kids to catch up" (Routman, 1997, p. 78). For this reason children should be read to regularly by their parents. When parents read to their children, they increase listening skills and create an interest in reading. Just 10 minutes a day can make a big impact on a child's reading success. It is important that parents encourage their children to read every day. It has been found that children who read for fun at least 30

minutes a day develop the needed skills to become better readers at school (Lopes, 1993).

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of increased emphasis on reading, during the period of September 2001 to January 2002, kindergarten, first, and second grade students will increase their skills in phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension and writing. These skills will be measured by pre- and posttest, teacher-constructed tests, checklists, and reading inventories.

In order to accomplish the project objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. The teacher will increase phonemic awareness through intensive activities using the various learning styles, rhyming, and sound word games.
2. The teacher will introduce and model strategies that will improve fluency and comprehension skills.
3. The teacher will provide activities to improve students' writing skills.
4. The teacher will increase students' vocabulary through exposure to a wide variety of literature.

Research Action Plan

Thesis: The focus of this research is improving the development of students' reading skills.

I. Preliminary Activities:

A. Kindergarten classroom

1. Gain administrative permission
2. Send out parent letters August 23, 2001
3. Send out parent surveys week of September 5, 2001
4. Administer the writing checklist week of September 5, 2001
5. Administer the sight word checklist during the week of September 5, 2001
6. Administer the phonemic awareness pretest
7. Administer the "What I Know About Books" checklist

B. First and second grade classrooms

1. Gain administrative permission
2. Send out parent letters August 23, 2001
3. Send out parent surveys week of September 5, 2001
4. Administer the phonemic awareness pretest
5. Administer the fluency and comprehension pretest
6. Administer the writing checklist
7. Administer the sight word inventory
8. Administer the "What I Know About Books" checklist

II. Daily Activities:

A. Kindergarten classroom

1. Increase awareness of sight words
2. Draw attention to print on a daily basis

B. First and second grade classrooms

1. Model a variety of reading strategies for the students to practice
2. A wide variety of materials will be made available for silent reading.
3. Journaling or story writing.
4. Model a variety of writing strategies daily.

III. Weekly Activities:

A. Kindergarten classroom

1. Activities designed to increase students' phonological awareness
2. Provide various materials in reading centers
3. The targeted second grade class will come for thirty minutes to read with their kindergarten partners.
4. Provide center time that focuses on reading and writing activities
5. Journal entries

B. First and second grade classroom

1. Activities designed to increase students' phonological awareness.
2. Third grade students will share a variety of materials with first and second grade partners for thirty minutes.
3. A writing center that contains a variety of writing utensils and materials will be made available.

IV. On-going Activities:

A. Kindergarten classroom

1. Administer the comprehension checklist throughout the intervention
2. Provide a wide variety of materials for free choice reading
3. Model and engage the students in developing comprehension skills.
4. Word wall
5. A writing center that contains a variety of writing utensils and materials will be made available
8. The teacher will model the writing strokes and provide time for independent practice throughout the intervention.
7. Students will dictate complete sentences to the teacher.
8. Provide opportunities to increase students' vocabulary through language experience activities throughout the intervention.

9. Increase students' vocabulary through the sharing of various literature based activities

B. First and second grade classrooms

1. Students will learn high-frequency words through a variety of strategies.
2. Students will learn a variety of decoding skills and spelling patterns.
3. Third grade students will share a variety of materials with first and second grade partners.
4. A reading center that contains a variety of reading materials will be made available.
5. Word wall.
6. Instruction and strategies for the expository, narrative, and persuasive writing styles.
7. Provide opportunities to increase students' vocabulary through language experience activities
8. Increase students' vocabulary through the sharing of various literature based activities

V. Closing Activities:

A. Kindergarten classroom

1. Administer the phonemic awareness posttest
2. Administer the writing checklist during the week of January 18, 2002.

3. Administer the sight word checklist
4. Administer the "What I Know About Books" checklist

B. First and second grade classrooms

1. Administer the phonemic awareness posttest
2. Administer the fluency and comprehension posttest

   Administer the writing checklist during the week of January 18, 2002.
3. Administer the sight word posttest
4. Administer the "What I Know About Books" checklist

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, a phonemic awareness record, a print awareness checklist, a writing checklist, and a parent survey will be developed for students in all targeted classrooms. Site A, Class B and the targeted class at Site B will be using fluency and comprehension selections, and sight word mastery test in addition to the above methods. At Site A, Class A will implement a comprehension checklist and a writing checklist. All assessments will be given initially and, with the exception of the parent survey and the comprehension checklist, all will be given as posttests.

Chapter 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension, and writing skills. In order to do so, the researchers implemented various phonemic awareness activities and a variety of fluency and comprehension strategies. An assortment of writing approaches was utilized to help in the development of writing skills.

This research began with obtaining parental consent. Kindergarten held a before school round up which enabled the teacher researcher to discuss the research project with the parents. The parents completed the consent forms and returned it to school within the first week. The first and second grade students took their consent forms home the first day of school and the consenting parents returned the forms by the end of the second week. Parent surveys (Appendix N) were sent home by all teacher-researchers after consent was received.

Students were tested at the beginning of the project and again at the conclusion. The assessments were on phonemic awareness (Appendix A), sight word recognition (Appendices F, G, H, and J) comprehension and fluency

(Appendices B,C, D, and E,). In addition to these assessments, writing and book knowledge checklists (Appendices L, M, and I) were completed on each child.

The phonemic awareness assessment consisted of four parts. The first aspect of the testing was to have the students sequence the alphabet by having them recite the alphabet individually to the researcher. The second area of phonemic awareness tested was letter-sound correlations. In this aspect of the test, the students were again asked to individually name and tell the sound of the upper and lower case letters of the alphabet to the researcher. The third step of evaluating phonemic awareness was to have the students participate in letter dictation. The researcher said the name of the letter, while the students wrote the uppercase and lowercase letter for each one on their individual papers. Finally, the students were asked to make letter sound identification by writing the letter of the sound that the researcher said. The teacher-researcher for the kindergarten class implemented this assessment the third week of school. This was due to the young age of the students. It was necessary to give the students time to become acclimated to the new educational environment. The first grade teacher researcher implemented this assessment during the first week of school. The second grade teacher researcher was able to complete this assessment by the end of the first month. This was due to the fact that there were some complications regarding curriculum.

The sight word recognition assessment was actually three assessments, one for each grade level. The test for Classroom A consisted of a list of sight words that was introduced to the students on flashcards. The students were to read the

individual words that were presented by the teacher-researcher on an individual basis. Classroom A, the kindergarten class, did not administer a pretest due to the developmental stage of the students at the beginning of the year; however, it was used at the end of this project as an assessment of growth. The tests for Classrooms B and C were presented in a multiple choice format and consisted of grade level appropriate words. The teacher-researcher for Classroom B gave this assessment in a whole class setting the third week of school, while the teacher researcher for Classroom C gave this assessment on an individual basis during the second and third weeks of school.

The comprehension and fluency assessment was presented in an individual reading inventory format to Classrooms B and C. This assessment was given on an individual basis and consisted of developmental levels from preprimer to second grade. The students read a short selection orally to the teacher researcher and then answered comprehension questions. The students read until they hit their frustration level. This assessment was administered to Classroom B during the second week of school. Classroom C received this assessment during the third and fourth weeks of school.

Writing and book knowledge checklists were filled out on each individual child. The writing list was used to evaluate the students' ability to write more efficiently. The book knowledge checklist was utilized to determine students' knowledge about the parts of a book and how to apply their knowledge. The writing checklist was completed based on observations by all teacher-researchers. The book knowledge checklist was completed on an individual basis in Classroom A,

while Classrooms B and C filled it out based on teacher observations. Classroom A implemented these lists during the third week of school. Classrooms B and C utilized these lists during the fourth and fifth weeks of school.

The implementation of the multiple assessments deviated greatly from the action plan. The assessment procedures required more time than anticipated. The assessments were too lengthy and too in depth to be completed in the allotted time frame. Classroom A also deviated from the plan, in that it was not able to utilize the comprehension checklist. This checklist was time consuming and took too much time away from the class.

To improve student's phonemic awareness, the teacher-researchers used a variety of poems and numerous nursery rhymes throughout the project. Finger plays and songs were also a part of the weekly routines used by all classes. The kindergarten and first grade classes implemented listening centers that were used during center time. Word walls and flash cards were a part of the daily routine of each class.

Classroom A, the kindergarten class, implemented the Sunform Alphabet System (Sunberg, 94) the second week of school. In this program the imagery phase is the initial step. A visual is presented which corresponds to each letter. The students memorize the pictures that go with the letters. This segment is presented in small chunks, and students do not progress to the next level until the material is mastered. When all of the imagery groups are mastered, the auditory step is initiated. The auditory phase was initiated during the fourth week

of school, and it focused on establishing a sound with a letter. This was also taught in small chunks, and mastery was required before the students moved on. In addition to the Sunform Alphabet System, the kindergarten researcher implemented Alphatime (New Dimensions In Education Inc., 72). Alphatime is a program that focuses on learning the letters with the sounds. Components of this program were used to give the students hands on learning experiences, and were introduced the seventh week of the project, and continued throughout.

Classroom B, the second grade class, was able to move at a rapid pace in phonemic awareness due to the ability level of the students in this area. The teacher-researcher was able to focus on the more complex skills in the area. This was done through a variety of activities such as pantomiming words, brain storming word patterns, and word mapping. These activities were initiated the beginning of the third week and continued throughout the 18 week period.

Classroom C, the first grade class, implemented the Sing, Spell, Read, and Write (S.S.R.W.) program (Dickson, 98), the second week of school. S.S.R.W. is a phonemic awareness program that teaches phonemic awareness and phonics through music and poetry. This program is sequential, interactive, and involves the majority of the multiple intelligences. The students began by singing a song about the letter sounds and taking turns leading the class by pointing at the letters as the class sings. Once the letter sounds was mastered, the class moved on to learning the blends. The students began reading short vowel words and short vowel books the sixth week of school. From the short vowel activities

the students progressed to long vowel words and books. This program progresses through the whole phonological process.

The many activities used during phonemic awareness increased the students' ability to read many new words. The second grade class had sufficient knowledge of the letter sounds, so as great an emphasis was not necessary. Review was given, and then the students worked more on the higher level skills. By using Sunform and Alphatime, the kindergarten students were immersed in the sounds and visual aspects of the alphabet. Flashcards were utilized daily to review the letter names and sounds. These activities may be a contributing factor for the amount of success that was seen. Using the nursery rhymes helped emphasize these new skills. The Sing Spell Read and Write that was used with the first grade class exposed the students to a variety of activities that utilized all learning styles. Much of this program is based around songs and rhymes that were supported by many forms of visual stimuli.

The interventions used to improve phonemic awareness also led to the development of fluency and comprehension. Numerous students were seen using the new skills when reading unfamiliar materials. In the kindergarten and first grade classes, big books were used on a weekly basis. The trade books were used on a daily basis in all classes. These books were used to model left to right progression, to identify the parts of a book, and to distinguish the identity of the author and the illustrator. By reading to the children daily, the teacher researchers were also able to model fluency. The trade books were used for paired reading activities. The first grade students participated in paired reading

activities three days out of the week. The goal for the kindergarten and second grade classes was for them to buddy up with a partner from the other class to read together once a week. This goal was not met due to the difficulty in scheduling. If scheduling could be revised, this could be a beneficial strategy. The few times that it occurred, the students seemed to enjoy the experience. The second grade class did drop everything and read (D.E.A.R.) three times a week. Other strategies used to increase fluency and comprehension were shared reading, partner reading, trade books, big books, story mapping, graphic organizers, magazines and newspapers. These interventions were used on a weekly basis throughout the project by all classes.

Word walls were successfully implemented in each of the classes for the first time. The students were able to see familiar words at a glance. This may have helped to increase reading, writing, and spelling skills. The focus of kindergarten was color words and sight words that were necessary for success at this grade level. The word wall was implemented in the kindergarten class the third week of school. Color words had been introduced starting the first week of school and were the first words placed on the word wall. Thereafter, sight words were added to the wall on a weekly basis and were available for students to use in the weekly journal writing. In addition to the word wall, various items throughout the classroom were labeled to develop a print rich environment. The first and second grade classes used the word wall for sight words that are a daily part of students' life. New words were added on a weekly basis with emphasis being placed on the patterns that some words may have. Classroom B introduced the

word wall the fourth week of school. All the high frequency words for second grade were displayed for the children to refer to on a daily basis. Classroom C implemented the word wall the eighth week of school. Five sight words were introduced each week and added to the board.

Writing skills were emphasized through the use of story mapping, graphic organizers, and journals by all classes as part of the weekly routine. The kindergarten class introduced journals that focused on the story of the day beginning the second week of school. The journals were mainly illustrations in the beginning, but as students progressed, they were encouraged to use words and form sentences if possible. The first grade class initiated journals the first week of school. The students were to create and illustrate stories based on given story starters. The second grade class introduced free writing journals the fifth week of school. The mechanics of writing were also an area of focus through the use of textbooks and centers by all classes as appropriate. Sentence structure and tracking were a great part of the kindergarten emphasis beginning the first week of school. The first and second grade classes did daily oral language activities to enhance the students' writing skills.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the four component intervention strategies of reading improvement, the teacher researchers initiated the project with a parent survey to gain knowledge of student's prior experiences with written language. Preassessments and post-assessments were administered to assess growth in the areas of phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension, and writing.

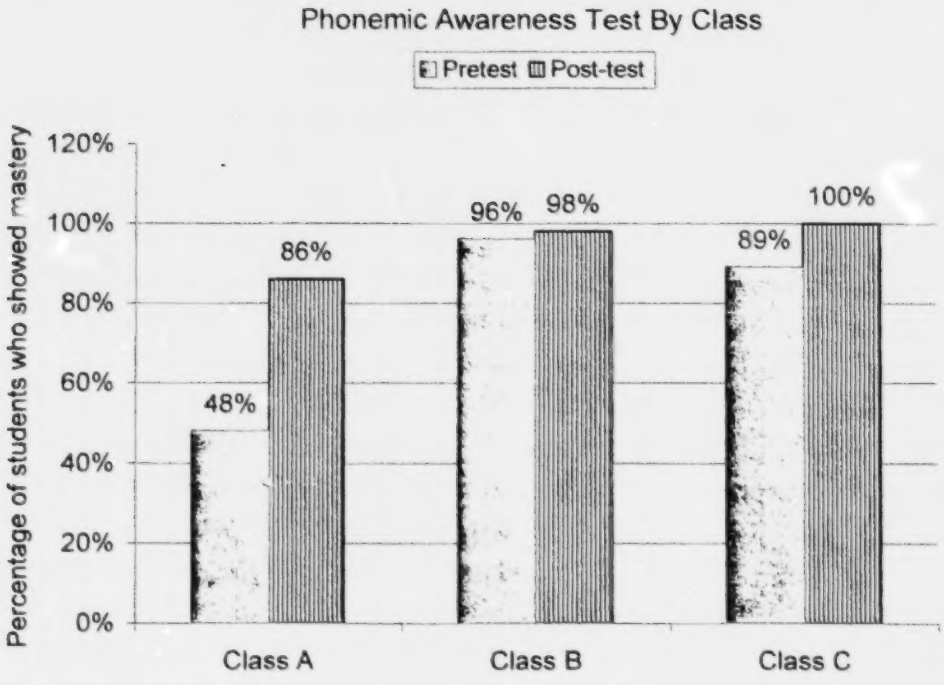

Figure 5. Phonemic Awareness Testing for Class A (Kindergarten), Class B (Second Grade), and Class C (First Grade)

Figure 5 shows the average of correct responses for all three classrooms in phonemic awareness. The results indicated that all of the classes involved in this project showed moderate to substantial growth. The percentage of mastery for Class A went from 48% to 86%, a 38% increase in mastery. The percentage of mastery for Class B went from 96% to 98%. The percentage of mastery for Class C went from 89% to 100%, an 11% increase in mastery.

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Table 3

Book Knowledge Student Checklist

Statement	Class	Always		Sometimes		Never	
		PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
I understand that a book is for reading	A	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	B	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	C	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
I know where to begin reading on a page	A	50%	100%	25%	0%	25%	6%
	B	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	C	33%	100%	67%	0%	0%	0%
I am able to turn the pages of a book properly	A	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	B	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	C	50%	100%	50%	0%	0%	0%
I know what the title of a book is	A	0%	31%	0%	0%	69%	0%
	B	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	C	33%	100%	67%	0%	0%	0%
I know what the author of a book is	A	0%	44%	0%	0%	100%	56%
	B	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	C	0%	83%	67%	17%	33%	0%
I know what the illustrator of a book is	A	0%	50%	0%	0%	100%	50%
	B	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	C	0%	67%	50%	33%	50%	0%

Table 3 shows the percentage of students who demonstrated the ability to identify certain aspects of books. The researcher for Classroom A checked this knowledge by individually working with the students. Classrooms B and C reported their findings through classroom work, a checklist, which is shown in

Table 3, and observations. Classrooms A and C had substantial growth while Classroom B had previously shown mastery.

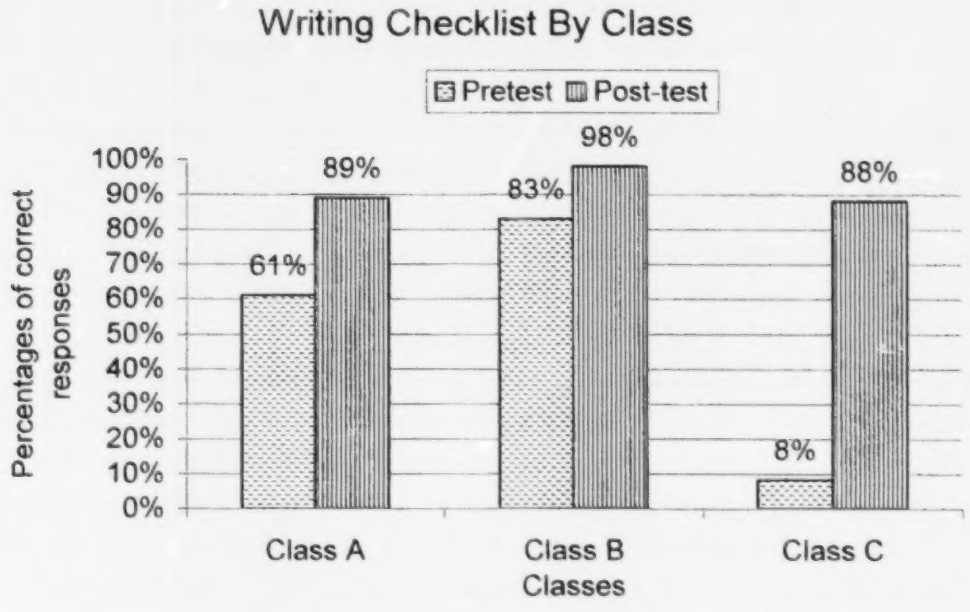

Figure 6. Writing Checklist For Class A (Kindergarten), Class B (Second Grade, and Class C (First Grade)

The researchers checked for a demonstration of knowledge through observations, class participation, and a writing checklist. Figure 6 shows that the percentage of correct responses on the writing checklist by Classroom A increased from 61% to 89%, a 28% increase. The percentage of correct responses by Classroom B increased from 83% to 98%, a 15 % increase. The most substantial gain was shown by Classroom C, which went from 8% correct responses to 88%, an increase of 80%.

Story mapping and graphic organizers were a great help in the development of writing skills. They increased the kindergarten students' awareness of print.

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The first and second grade classes were taught how to utilize these tools, and they were a part of their weekly routines.

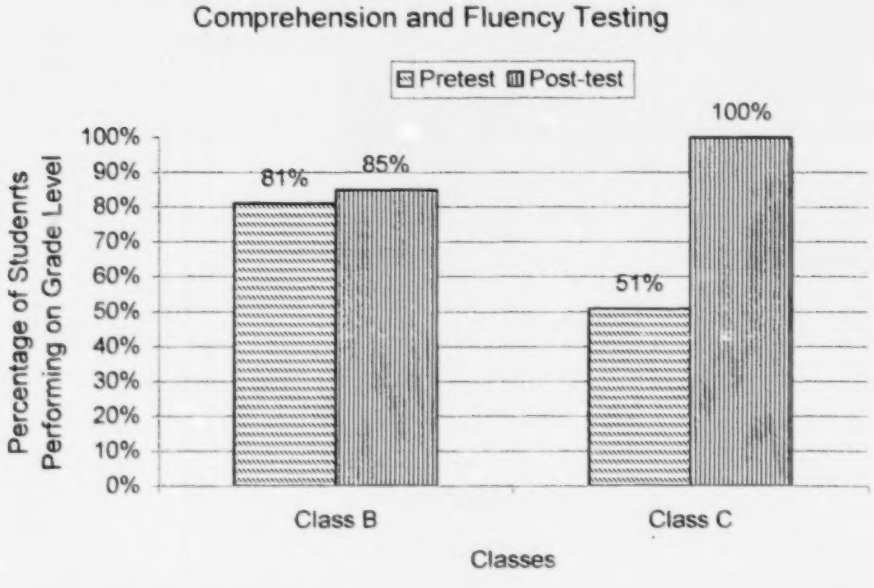

Figure 7. First and Second Grade Comprehension and Fluency Assessment

Figure 7 shows the number of students performing on grade level in comprehension and fluency in first and second grade. The researchers in Classrooms B and C presented individual reading inventories. Each student read a selection and answered questions. This process was performed on an individual basis at the beginning and then again at the end of the research. The percentage of students who showed mastery in Classroom B went from 81% to 85%. The percentage of students who showed mastery in Classroom C went from 51% to 100 %, a gain of 49% mastery.

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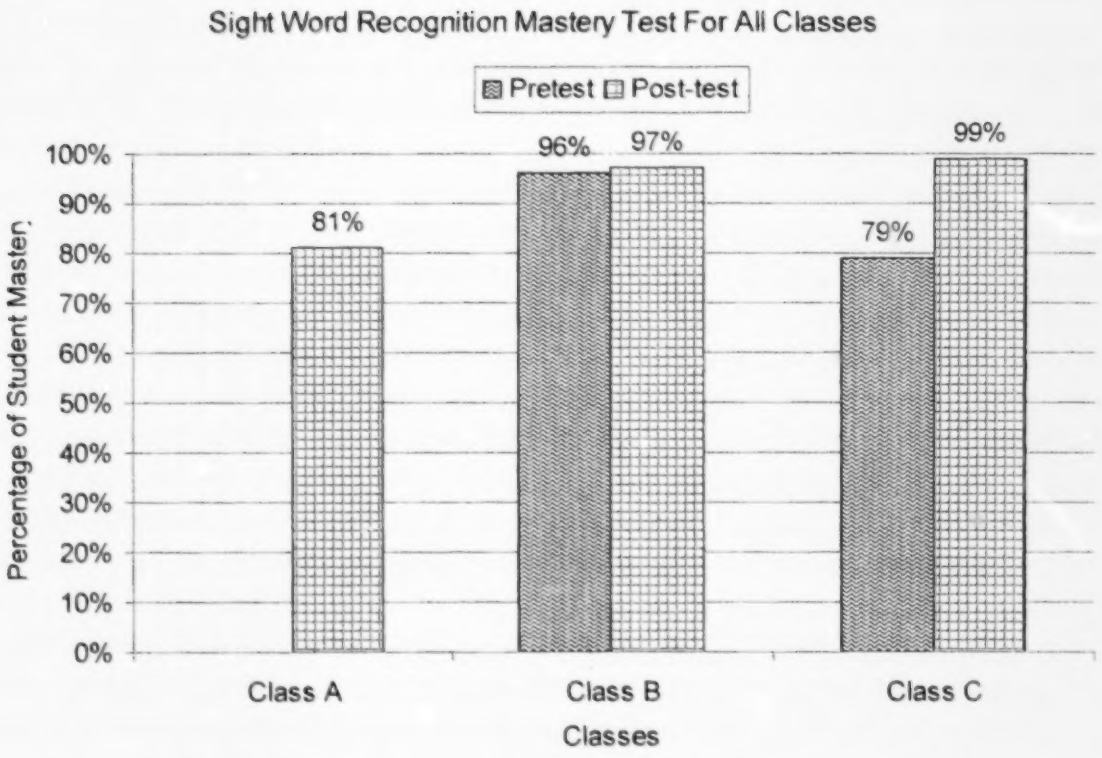

Figure 8. Sight Word Mastery Recognition Assessment For Class A (Kindergarten), Class B (Second Grade, and Class C (First Grade)
Note: Classroom A did not administer a sight word pretest.

Figure 8 shows the percentage of students who showed mastery of sight words on grade level in all classrooms. Classroom A administered this assessment (Appendix J) on an individual basis at the end of the project by having students read the words on flashcards. No pre-measure was utilized by Classroom A due to the developmental stage of the kindergarten students at the beginning of the year. Classrooms B and C administered the assessments at the beginning and the end of the project. The tests were used to identify the learners' ability levels of reading sight words. The tests for Classrooms B and C

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were multiple-choice selections in which the students identified words orally given by the teachers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on students reading skills, the students' showed a marked improvement in reading. We feel that this was a beneficial project that enabled us to monitor our students' growth. The variety and diversity of the activities enhanced our teaching and the children's learning. Growth was definitely seen in the students and changed the way the teacher-researchers approach teaching. Had this project continued to the end of the school year, we feel that dramatic growth would have been evident.

We would not recommend the magnitude of assessments that we used. It was very time consuming due to the fact that much of it was individualized. Another factor that we would change would be that of the parent survey. Although this provided us with insights into the home, it was irrelevant information for what we were trying to accomplish. The kindergarten researcher found that the comprehension checklist (Appendix K) did not work. Too much time was spent filling out the checklist which took away valuable teaching time.

In conclusion, we have found that by using a variety of teaching styles and approaches, we can reach all children. There is no one right way to teach reading. When we immerse children in a variety of activities consistently, we can continue to build the knowledge necessary for them to meet with success.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Phonemic Awareness Record

Student Number_____ Date_____

*1. Alphabet Sequencing

"Please say the alphabet." (Accept singing)
Cross out omitted letters

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V

W X Y Z

*2. Letter-Sound Correlations

Use uppercase alphabet cards. Ask student the name of each letter and the sound that it makes. Repeat the same procedure with the lowercase alphabet cards. Place an X by incorrect responses.

Uppercase	Name	Sound	Lowercase	Name	Sound
Q			Q		
W			W		
E			E		
R			R		
T			T		
Y			Y		
U			U		
I			I		
O			O		
P			P		
A			A		
S			S		
D			D		
F			F		
G			G		
H			H		
J			J		
K			K		
L			L		
Z			Z		
X			X		
C			C		
V			V		
B			B		
N			N		
M			M		

3. Letter Dictation

After I say the name of a letter, write the uppercase/capital and lowercase/small letter for each one.

1. M m	2. Z z	3. N n	4. B b
5. V v	6. C c	7. X x	8. A a
9. S s	10. D d	11. F f	12. K k
13. Q q	14. J j	15. W w	16. E e
17. P p	18. O o	19. I i	20. H h
21. U u	22. Y y	23. R r	24. G g
25. L l	26. T t		

4. Letter-Sound Identification

Write the letter that says the sound that I say. If more than one letter says that sound, write those sounds.

____1. (n) n	____10. (a) a	____19. (u) u	____28. (h) h
____2. (j) j, g	____11. (e) e	____20. (i) i, y	____29. (v) v
____3. (e) e	____12. (u) u	____21. (w) w	____30. (qw) q
____4. (a) a	____13. (d) d	____22. (k) c, k	
____5. (r)r	____14. (i) i	____23. (y) y	
____6. (g) g	____15. (p) p	____24. (o) o	
____7. (b) b	____16. (x) ks	____25. (l) l	
____8. (o) o	____17. (t) t	____26. (f) f	
____9. (m) m	____18. (z) z	____27. (s) s, c	

Appendix B
Pre-primer Fluency and Comprehension Selection

Fluency Selection Pre-primer

Student Number_____ Date_____

RIDING BIKES

Sam and I like to ride our bikes.
We ride our bikes to school.
After school we go to the park.
We ride our bikes up and down the hills at the park.
It is fun to ride bikes with Sam.

Scoring for Fluency 41 words

0 - Independent level
1-4 - Instructional level
5 or more - Frustration level

Comprehension Selection

_____ 1. What does Sam like to do?

_____ 2. Where do they ride their bikes?

_____ 3. Do you like to ride bikes? (Why or why not?)

_____ 4. What do we ride our bikes on at the park?

Scoring for Comprehension

0 - Independent
1 - Instructional
2 or more – Frustration level

RIDING BIKES

Sam and I like to ride our bikes.
We ride our bikes to school.
After school we go to the park.
We ride our bikes up and down the hills at the park.
It is fun to ride bikes with Sam.

Fluency Selection Primer

Student Number_____ Date_____

SAL THE PIG

I live in a big house on an old farm.
It is fun to play with the animals on our farm.
One day my mom was not happy with one of the animals.
Sal the pig got out of his pen.
He ran in the back door and into the house.
He knocked over a chair and broke one of my mom's best pots.

Scoring for Fluency 64 words

0 – Independent level
1-5 - Instructional level
5 or more - Frustration level

Comprehension Selection

_____ 1. Where does the person in this story live?

_____ 2. What is it fun to do?

_____ 3. Who is Sal?

_____ 4. How did mom feel about Sal?

_____ 5. What did Sal do?

Scoring for Comprehension

0 - Independent
1 - Instructional
2 or more – Frustration level

Fluency Selection

SAL THE PIG

I live in a big house on an old farm.
It is fun to play with the animals on our farm.
One day my mom was not happy with one of the animals.
Sal the pig got out of his pen.
He ran in the back door and into the house.
He knocked over a chair and broke one of my mom's best pots.

1st

Student Number_____ Date_____

New Friends

Would you like to live in a house with three dogs? A while back I found a letter. I took it to the house where it belonged. When I walked in I had three very big dogs looking at me. They started to bark at me. One of them came up and licked me in the face. The man who lived in the house told me I could play with the dogs. I played with them for a long time. When it was time for me to go the old man told me to come again. I had made four new friends.

Scoring for Fluency 102 words

0 - Independent level
1-6 - Instructional level
5 or more - Frustration level

Comprehension Selection

_____ 1. What did the person in this story find?

_____ 2. What did he do with the letter?

_____ 3. How did he know where to return the letter? (H.O.)

_____ 4. What did the dogs do when the person in this story walked into the house?

_____ 5. How did the old man feel about his visitor?

Scoring for Comprehension

0 - Independent
1 - Instructional
2 or more - Frustration level

New Friends

Would you like to live in a house with three dogs? A while back I found a letter. I took it to the house where it belonged. When I walked in I had three very big dogs looking at me. They started to bark at me. One of them came up and licked me in the face. The man who lived in the house told me I could play with the dogs. I played with them for a long time. When it was time for me to go the old man told me to come again. I had made four new friends.

Appendix E
Second Grade Fluency and Comprehension Selection

2nd

Student Number_____ Date_____

A Friend In the Woods

Mike and his family live in a big house in the country. He likes to run and play with his dog in the woods around his house whenever he can. One evening in the early fall Mike and his dog saw a masked raccoon. It was down by a pond and looked like it was washing something. The dog got excited and ran and barked. He scared the raccoon. The raccoon dropped what it had and took off up a tree. The next evening Mike went back to the pond without his dog. He placed apple slices on a huge rock by the water and hid behind a log to watch. He watched for a while before he saw the little masked animal. It crept up to apple slices and looked around. The raccoon took the pieces into his little paws and washed and ate them one at a time. After than Mike went to the pond once a week to feed and watch his little friend.

Scoring for Fluency 167 words

0 - 3 - Independent level
4 – 19 - Instructional level
20 or more - Frustration level

Comprehension Selection

_____ 1. What does Mike like to do?

_____ 2. What did Mike and his dog find in the wood?

_____3. Did the raccoon like Mike's dog? How do you know?

_____ 4. What did Mike do the next day?

_____ 5. Did his patience pay off?

_____ 6. What time of year was it when Mike found the raccoon?

Scoring for Comprehension
0 - Independent
1 - Instructional
2 or more – Frustration level

Fluency Selection

A Friend In the Woods

Mike and his family live in a big house in the country. He likes to run and play with his dog in the woods around his house whenever he can. One evening in the early fall Mike and his dog saw a masked raccoon. It was down by a pond and looked like it was washing something. The dog got excited and ran and barked. He scared the raccoon. The raccoon dropped what it had and took off up a tree. The next evening Mike went back to the pond without his dog. He placed apple slices on a huge rock by the water and hid behind a log to watch. He watched for a while before he saw the little masked animal. It crept up to apple slices and looked around. The raccoon took the pieces into his little paws and washed and ate them one at a time. After than Mike went to the pond once a week to feed and watch his little friend.

Master Lists for Sight Word Tests

1st	2nd
can	together
green	write
make	pick
play	keep
said	breakfast
funny	myself
get	carry
mother	which
good	everyone
where	hold
please	these
laugh	always
came	friend
was	today
around	save
tell	light
once	been
again	their
never	should

Appendix G
First Grade Sight Word Recognition Mastery Test

1. came	can	camp	come
2. gray	green	grape	group
3. make	made	milk	mom
4. plow	plum	play	plunk
5. say	saw	seen	said
6. funny	funky	fun	found
7. got	green	get	gop
8. monkey	mother	mums	mop
9. goal	goes	good	grow
10. when	walk	went	where
11. play	purple	please	plow
12. laugh	lot	let	low
13. come	came	cow	call
14. went	were	was	where
15. apple	around	at	act
16. talk	top	tell	time
17. one	on	okay	once
18. around	again	act	at
19. not	new	never	no

Appendix H
Second Grade Sight Word Recognition Mastery Test

1.	tall	together	time	toy
2.	write	wrong	will	wall
3.	pull	peace	put	pick
4.	kick	kit	keep	kindle
5.	brought	bill	breakfast	bright
6.	myself	mine	me	mop
7.	car	carry	candle	caught
8.	watch	wheel	which	wipe
9.	everyone	exit	enough	enemy
10.	hide	hop	hit	hold
11.	those	them	these	that
12.	apple	always	ate	act
13.	friend	found	feel	fact
14.	talk	today	too	tell
15.	sell	sick	save	set
16.	lick	lop	light	let
17.	bill	bike	bell	been
18.	up	until	under	utter
19.	their	they	them	those
20.	so	sew	should	shock

Appendix I
Book Knowledge Checklist

What I Know About Books

	Always	*Sometimes*	*Never*
I understand that a book is for reading	_____	_____	_____
I know where to begin reading on a page	_____	_____	_____
I am able to turn the pages of a book properly	_____	_____	_____
I know what the title of a book is	_____	_____	_____
I know what the author of a book is	_____	_____	_____
I know what the illustrator of a book is	_____	_____	_____

Appendix J
Kindergarten Sight Word Checklist

Sight Word Checklist

Student Number_____

Sight Words	Mastery (+)	Not Mastered (-)
red		
blue		
yellow		
orange		
purple		
brown		
black		
green		
can		
I		
the		
and		
in		
said		
on		
a		
we		
to		
my		
like		
did		
will		
is		
you		

Appendix K
Kindergarten Comprehension Checklist

CORRECT (+) INCORRECT (-)

Titles

Student #																				

Appendix L
Kindergarten Writing Checklist

	MASTERED (+)	NOT MASTERED (-)
Proper sitting position		
Proper paper position		
Proper pencil grip		
Left to right progress		
Pre-letter writing strokes		
Writing of letters		
Correct movement of pencil		
Recognize individual words in a sentence		
Identifies spaces between words in a sentence		
Identifies capital letter at beginning of sentence		
Identifies punctuation mark at end of sentence		

Appendix M
First and Second Grade Writing Checklist

Student Number_____

+ Mastered - Not mastered

Emergent Level	**Pre**	**Post**
Writes the first letter in a word		
Writes the last letter in a word		
Writes some middle letters in a word		
Leaves spaces between words		
Puts a period and a capital letter in the right place		
Can write a complete sentence		

Early-Fluency Level	**Pre**	**Post**
Uses capital letters and punctuation properly		
Spells high frequency words correctly		
Can write a compete sentence		
Is able to sequence ideas to write stories of four or more sentences		
Can correct errors		
Can follow the steps of the writing process		

Appendix N
Parental Involvement Survey

Parent Survey

	Always	Most often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
I read for my own enjoyment.					
I read to my child daily					
My child looks at / reads books by self.					
My child understands what is read or heard from books.					
My child likes to draw or write.					
My child can write simple words and sentences.					

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